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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**ORANGE COVE BUSINESSMAN IS SENTENCED TO SIX YEARS IMPRISONMENT  
FOR LAUNDERING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN FRAUDULENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS**

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that on Monday, June 18, 2007, SALAMEH MOHAMMAD RASHID, 58, of Reedley, was sentenced to seventy-two months imprisonment by United States District Judge Oliver Wanger stemming from his laundering of thousands of fraudulent unemployment insurance benefits checks as owner of "Primo Market" in Orange Cove, California. The defendant was convicted in March 2007 of conspiracy to money laundering.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, and the California Employment Development Department, Investigation Division with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Stanley A. Boone and Sheila K. Oberto, who prosecuted the case, the defendant cashed thousands of fraudulent unemployment insurance checks totaling approximately \$16 million dollars from 1999 to April 2003. The defendant cashed over 66,000 fraudulent unemployment insurance checks from as far north as Corning to as far south as Calexico, California. In addition to State of California issued checks, the defendant also cashed fraudulent out-of-state checks issued by Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Washington and Texas. The defendant was one of 10 individuals originally indicted in April

2003 on a variety of charges. As part of the scheme, the defendant would cash fraudulent unemployment insurance checks on behalf of the other co-defendants and charge a fee for the service. The fee was a percentage of the face value up to \$50 per check depending on the agreement he had with a particular co-defendant. At the time of the defendant's arrest, the United States seized \$430,000 from the defendant, including cash in the amount of \$178,000 found at his residence and \$107,000 found at his business.

According to United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, "The federal government takes serious those individuals who defraud the state government of unemployment insurance benefits and will vigorously prosecute those who take from a system designed to help those in need. Those less than honest business people who cash these fraudulent unemployment checks are an integral part of the scheme and their role is vital to accomplishing these frauds. Their prosecution will not be ignored."

"This sentencing serves as a stern warning to any individuals who could commit fraud against the Department's Unemployment Insurance programs," said Gordon S. Heddell, Inspector General, United States Department of Labor. "My office will continue to collaborate with other law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Attorney to successfully stop identity theft schemes by organized crime groups defrauding the government."

"This sentencing sends a message loud and clear: unemployment insurance fraud is a serious crime with serious consequences," Patrick Henning, Director of the Employment Development Department (EDD), said. "Unemployment insurance is a lifeline for workers as they search for a new job. EDD is committed to keeping that lifeline strong. We are constantly improving our fraud detection and prevention efforts and working with the Justice Department to ensure that criminals who target the employer-supported Unemployment Insurance fund are brought to justice."

Judge Wanger, in sentencing the defendant, also imposed restitution in the amount of \$16,266,908.24 and 36 months of supervised release.

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